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**UZBEKISTAN**

## FIRST PERSON Opportunities for Better Future

**USAID program creates opportunities for vulnerable women to secure employment and build a better future.**



*Dilorom Muminova in her pastry shop, Samarkand. Photo: DDRP*

*“Now can help my friends to make right decisions in life, avoid drug use and social and personal problems related to it.”*

*- Dilorom Muminova, Samarkand*

Dilorom Muminova grew up in a big family with many children and limited financial resources. With no money to pursue vocational education and no prospects for employment, Dilorom turned to the USAID-funded Sister-to Sister program in Samarkand for help. In 2006, she enrolled in a pastry-making course that is offered as part of Sister to Sister program for vulnerable women. During the six-month course Dilorom proved to be one of the most motivated students and was selected for an advanced program, where she perfected her skills for another ten months. Two years have already passed since Dilorom has completed the training – and her life has changed dramatically over that time.

Shortly after completion of the courses, Dilorom developed a business plan with support from the project and received a \$250 micro-credit from a local microfinance organization to start her own business. Today, she is the owner of 'Dilorom', a pastry-cooking shop in Samarkand City. Dilorom is also helping other young women like herself by teaching pastry-making classes for the Sister-to Sister program. She has already trained 17 young women. Dilorom has also become a member of Business Women's Association "Tadbirkor Ayol" and won the "Tashabbus 2006" annual contest in nomination of "Best Business Women" in 2006.

Dilorom is grateful for the opportunity she was given. "Thanks to the training by the Sister to Sister program, I received necessary professional skills to create my own business," says Dilorom. "The program increased my confidence and helped me to realize that I have chosen the right way. Now can help my friends to make right decisions in life, avoid drug use and social and personal problems related to it."

The Sister to Sister program is a component of the USAID-funded Drug Demand Reduction Program. Implemented by the Business Women's Association "Tadbirkor Ayol," it has provided free vocational courses to hundreds of women from 2004 to 2008. In addition to vocational skills trainings, the courses included lessons on drug use prevention and consultations by medical specialists.